

THE LORD MY PORTION or, DAILY NEED DIVINELY SUPPLIED

By Octavius Winslow, 1870

PREFACE

The Lord's people but imperfectly realize their boundless wealth. They resemble an heir to whom a vast estate has been bequeathed, but who yet remains ignorant of the rich and extensive mines which underlie its surface, filling every acre with veins of the richest ore, until some incidental upturned sod brings to light the precious deposit. God has given us His Word--a field of wealth incalculable; His Son--in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; the covenant of grace--ordered in all things and sure; and Himself, our infinite, all-sufficient, all-satisfying, and inalienable--PORTION. Well may the apostle, summing up the inventory of our possessions, exclaim--as if no measurement or number could compass and compute their extent-- "*ALL THINGS are yours!*"

To enable the pious reader to estimate in some experimental measure **his vast opulence**, is the design of this little work. The writer has endeavored to concentrate all the believer's wealth--where, in truth, God has deposited it--in JESUS; deeply, solemnly convinced that, it is the lack of more simple views of Christ, and a more direct application to His mediatorial sufficiency--dealing with the Father more immediately through the Son, in whom it pleased Him that all fullness should dwell--which is the cause of so much soul-leanness, prostration of spiritual power, and languor of love in many of the saints.

The points of light in which God in Christ may be regarded as the believer's PORTION were many and inviting. The writer trusts his pages will afford at least some faint reflection of "the unsearchable riches of Christ," to which the weakest, the obscurest Christ-believing, Christ-loving soul may prefer a personal claim, and say, "All is mine, for I am Christ's, and Christ is God's!"

THE LORD MY PORTION

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul; therefore I will hope in Him." Lam. 3:24

It is our great privilege, beloved, that we live in a *portionless* world. This is both our distinctive badge and our Christian charter. When God parceled out the land of Canaan among the tribes of Israel, He made an exception in the tribe of Levi, to whom He said, *"You shall have no inheritance in the land, neither shall you have any part among them;"* assigning as His reason, *"I am your share and your inheritance."* The gospel teaching of this is obvious and significant. As the Lord's true priesthood, this world is not our portion, nor earth our rest. It may have required some painful discipline, and no small measure of faith, on the part of the devout Levite, as he gazed upon the fertile meadows, the watered plains, and the vine-clad hills of the Promised Land, before he was made willing to relinquish it all for Him who is invisible--and it needs no little teaching and discipline of our God, and no little faith on our part, before we are led to give up the world, the creature, self, and all, for Christ--satisfied to have the Lord alone as our Portion, and heaven only as our inheritance.

But the Lord will not put His people off with anything unworthy of Him to give, or them to accept. He has set them apart for Himself, and Himself apart for them. "All believers are the Lord's CLERGY; and as they are *His* portion, so He is *theirs*." (Leighton.) "The Lord's portion is His people, Israel is the lot of His inheritance." "The Lord is my portion, says my soul." His love to us was so great, that when He could give no greater proof of that love, He gave HIMSELF. Nothing more could have expressed the yearnings of His heart, nothing less could have satisfied the desires of ours.

And oh, *what* a Portion is God! All that He is and all that He has is ours! Every attribute of His being is over us, every perfection of His nature encircles us, every pulse of His heart beats for us, every glance of His eye smiles upon us. We dwell in God, and God dwells in us. It is not the world which is our portion, but HE who made, upholds and governs the world. It is not the creature who is our portion, but the Lord of angels and the Creator of men. Infinite portion! illimitable power! immeasurable grace! boundless love! all-satisfying good! all, *all* is ours!

And *what* a Portion, O my soul, is Christ! A divine Christ, a redeeming Christ, a full Christ, a sympathizing, ever-present, ever-precious, ever-loving Christ.

'Lord, I bless You for the discipline that brought me to realize what a divine, all-satisfying Portion I have in Yourself. You took from me an earthly portion, only to enrich me with a Heavenly one. You removed from me the human prop upon which I too fondly and idolatrously leaned, that I might learn what Christ was, as my soul's all-sufficient, all-satisfying, and everlasting Portion. I can now admire

the wisdom and adore the love that blasted my gourds and emptied me from vessel to vessel, that, rising superior to the broken staff, the drooping flower, and the failing spring of creature good, I might claim my portion as a true spiritual Levite in Yourself alone.'

Believer in Jesus! make the most of your portion. It is all-sufficient for all your need. God has, perhaps, made you poor in this world, that you might be rich in faith and an heir of that *kingdom of glory*, the New Jerusalem, He has prepared for you--whose foundations are precious stones, whose walls are jasper, whose gates are pearls, whose streets are pure gold, and through which softly flows the river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb, in the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river is the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruit, and yielding her fruit every month. All this awaits you! Hope in the Lord, hope in adversity, hope in trial, hope against hope, for God in Christ is your present and eternal Portion. "The Lord is my Portion, says my soul; *therefore* I will HOPE in Him."

THE LORD MY HUSBAND

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul"

"For **your Maker is your husband**--the Lord Almighty is his name--the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth." Isaiah 54:5

How many--appropriate to our circumstances, and endearing to our hearts--are the titles and relations of God! Is there one more sacred or precious to the Christian widow than this-- "*Your Maker is your HUSBAND.*" The Lord brings us into a gracious and experimental acquaintance with Himself by the circumstances in which He places us. Just as we learn certain lessons in certain schools, so we learn the relationships which the Lord sustains to us in the positions in life to which those divine relations are the most appropriate. Thus, He may have written you a widow, a "widow indeed," that He might stand to you in a new and more endeared relation--even as you stand to Him in a new and more dependent character--the relation of a HUSBAND--the character of a *widow*. As such He is your portion. Your bereavement is so crushing, your grief so profound, your desolation so vast, your loss so irreparable, the pen shrinks from even the attempt to describe it. The strong and beautiful staff is broken, the earthly counselor is perished, the tongue is mute that blessed you, the bosom cold that pillowed you, the eye dim that smiled upon you, and the whole landscape of life is draped in wintry coldness and gloom.

But the Lord is your Portion. "For your Maker is your husband--the Lord Almighty is his name." Divorced by death from an earthly husband, you are united more especially and closely to a Divine and heavenly Husband--even to God in Christ, who stands now in a new and more endeared relation to you, as you have now a new and more sacred claim upon Him. The *widow* is an object of His especial regard. No being has He more closely fenced, none for whom He has discovered more tender care. Listen to some of His touching injunctions respecting you.

"You shall not afflict the WIDOW." "Plead for the WIDOW." "He will establish the border of the WIDOW." "He relieves the fatherless and the WIDOW." Such is the divine Portion, under whose sheltering wing you have now come to rest. *"Your Maker is your HUSBAND."* All, and infinitely more, that the fondest, most powerful, and faithful husband ever was, the Lord is to you. Let Him, as none other can, fill the vacant place. He can make even your solitary and desolate heart sing for joy. Espouse Christ afresh. Renew your 'first love' to Him, the love of your earliest union.

Trace nothing but love in the removal of a human object so dear; and know that love--divine, tender, unchangeable love--will guard, guide, and comfort you until wedded hearts, sundered by death, shall meet to renew a fellowship of love in the glorified presence of Jesus never to be sundered more.

Blessed Jesus! heavenly Husband! let me now be united only and forever to You! Give me Your Spirit to seal the sacred union. Enable me, as enjoined in the word, "to trust in God, and to continue in supplication and prayer night and day, to lodge strangers, to wash the saints' feet, to relieve the afflicted, and diligently to follow every good work" (1 Tim. 5:5, 10). And thus striving by Your grace to glorify You in the solemn character of a God-fearing, God-trusting widow, enable me to rejoice in You as my portion--my Husband--believing that You will shield me in temptation, supply me in need, comfort me in sorrow, be with me in death, and give me a place at the marriage-supper of the Lamb.

In addition to the loneliness of widowhood, there may be the heavy charge and anxious responsibility of the *parent*. Your *children*, are half orphans--*fatherless*. Be it so. You have now a *double* claim on God's care and provision; and that claim, offered in the prayer of faith, He will acknowledge. His promise is--and on that promise you must rely--*"Leave your FATHERLESS CHILDREN, I will preserve them alive--and let your widows trust in me."* God will now be, in its fullest sense, your children's Father. He will preserve them alive; in other words, He will provide for the life that now is, and will make them partakers of the life that is to come in the sovereignty of His grace. Have faith in God! He never yet broke a promise to a saint--He never will to *you!*

THE LORD MY BROTHER

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul"

"Whoever does God's will is My **brother**." Mark 3:35

Precious portion this--Christ our BROTHER! If our religion bears this divine stamp of reality--*the doing God's will*--then, not only are all the saints of God our brethren, but all are Christ's brethren, He standing in the relation to all of the Elder Brother--"the FIRST-BORN among many brethren." The Elder Brother under the law was clothed with peculiar and great privileges. Not only to him belonged the birthright, but he was invested with great power, was entitled to a double share of the patrimony, and, what was of great importance, he was the priest of the family, discharging all the duties and offices of religion. Now all this, and much more, is Jesus our Elder Brother. To Him belongs every attraction that wins our admiration, every perfection that awakens our love, every quality that fits Him to discharge the high and peculiar duties and obligations of a brother. My soul, recall some of them, that you may possess a higher estimate of the worth and preciousness of this your Portion--the Lord your Brother; and learn to love Him more intensely, to trust Him more implicitly, and serve Him more faithfully.

As our Brother, **Christ partakes of our human nature**. He could not be our brother, nor feel a brother's love, nor discharge a brother's duties, were He not "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh." Thus we read, *"Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same--therefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His BRETHREN."* Sweet truth, O my soul! Jesus your Portion took into union with His divine your own veritable nature, and wears it still, that, from the highest throne in glory, a stream of *human sympathy* might continuously flow down, blending with every trial, temptation, need, and sorrow of the lowest disciple on earth.

This suggests another and a touching view of our Elder Brother. **Jesus was educated in the school of suffering and sorrow**. The personal experience of sorrow is essential to true sympathy. *"If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it,"* just because all belong to one suffering body, of which Christ, the "Man of sorrows," is the one Head. My soul, make much of the sinless humanity of Jesus your Brother. He has sent your affliction that in it He, by sympathy, may be afflicted. He has unsealed your fount of tears that, in compassion, His might flow in the same channel with yours.

He wants you to know Him more intimately; and as there is not so strong and sure a test of real friendship and affection and relationship as *adversity*, so He sends the discipline of sorrow that we might prove His love, test His friendship,

and know Him more experimentally and blessedly as our *Brother born for adversity*. O my soul! repair to Him as such. Is your earthly brother's house closed against you? the door of this Brother is ever *open* night and day. Come when, come how, come with what you may, never forget Christ, your Brother, is an *open door*. Aim only, aim constantly, to do God's will from the heart, for Jesus has said, "Whoever *does the will of God* is my brother."

It is no little or dubious evidence that Christ is our Brother--if we love Christ's brethren. If this is lacking we may justly question the reality of our fraternal relation to Christ. "By this we know that we have passed from death unto life, *because we love the brethren*." Herein do we establish our relation by our likeness to the Elder Brother. Christ loves all His brethren alike. And if I love them--not because they are of my creed, or of my Church--but because they are Christ's brethren, then do I evidence my relation to the one and true Christian Brotherhood.

Lord, You are gone before us,
Our mansions to prepare,
In sympathy a BROTHER,
A Father in Your care.

No power in You is lacking,
Nor lacking is Your will;
Whatever our vessels measure,
Your love will ever fill.

THE LORD MY HOPE

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul"

*"The Lord Jesus Christ, who is our **hope**."*--1 Tim. 1:1

What a precious possession of the believing soul, springing from the Lord as his Portion, is *hope*. Rob the poor worldling of his--though it be but earth-bound, and fading as a midsummer's evening sun--and you have plunged him in the dark and deep abyss of despondency and despair. Man *without hope* is the most miserable being in the universe. But with the hope of the Christian glowing in his heart--a hope of which God is the Giver, Jesus the Foundation, the Spirit the Author, and heaven the goal--and there lives not among the happy, a happier being than he. Thus the believer is "saved by hope." Look, my soul, for a moment at this inestimable part of your portion, and learn more thoroughly in what it consists--what the sweet soothing it imparts, the holy obligations it

imposes, and the splendid revelations it anticipates and unveils to faith's far-seeing eye. HOW does the believing soul arrive at the possession of Christ as its hope?

The first step is to relinquish every other. A hope of heaven built upon obedience to the law, upon our personal merits, upon anything of good that we fancy we are or can do, is a false hope; and, persisted in, will most assuredly make its deluded and unhappy possessor lamentably and eternally ashamed. Hope, too, springing from church privileges, religious ordinances, charitable gifts and pious duties, is equally fallacious and fatal.

But you, O believer, have not so learned Christ, if so be you have been taught by Him the truth as it is in Jesus. The Holy Spirit has written the sentence of death upon yourself, and upon all the dead works springing from self; and fleeing as from a plague-tainted garment out of your own righteousness, you have run into Christ, and enfolding yourself by faith in His righteousness, wrought by His obedience and dyed in His blood, you are justified and saved. Accepted in Him you are "beautiful as Tirzah, and all your garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made you glad." And now you have a "good hope through grace," and "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Then let us raise loud and high the thanksgiving anthem, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a *living* hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away."

Look well to it that the lamp of your Christian hope is constantly trimmed and brightly burning. The *golden oil* that feeds the lamp is drawn from *Jesus Christ*, and the hand that trims the flame is *faith*. Despond not if at times the sun of your hope--to change the figure--is for a moment shaded, or is partially eclipsed. Built upon, and springing from Jesus Christ, it cannot entirely expire, since He Himself is our hope. Corruption within may strive to weaken it, adversity without may seem to shake it, temptations from concealed sources may fearfully assail it, nevertheless, your hope shall not perish from the Lord, but, built upon Christ, nourished by Christ, kept by Christ, and looking forward to being with and enjoying Christ forever, like a fine setting sun it shall grow larger and brighter as it descends, until dissolving into heaven's eternal effulgence it is lost in the full fruition of glory.

With such a hope as Christ, how strong and solemn the obligation to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live godly, righteously, and soberly in this present evil world. How humbly and submissively should we bow to all our Father's afflictive discipline, since He has given us His beloved Son to dwell in our

hearts "the hope of glory." Thus "every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as He is pure." Cheer up, then, disconsolate one!

THE LORD MY HELPER

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul"

That is why we can say with confidence, "**The Lord is my helper**, so I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?" Hebrews 13:6

The believer is as *helpless* in himself as he is *portionless* in the world; and both lessons are only learned by experience--the one, in the school of the soul's nothingness; the other, in the school of earth's insufficiency. Hallowed teaching this which leads to such blessed results! But the lesson of our spiritual helplessness is not once learned, and learned for all time. Oh no! It is a daily, hourly lesson, learned in every event and incident of our life, yet never completed until we pass to the wider sphere, the sublimer studies, the higher, nobler attainments of glory.

Oh, what divine studies await our enlarged faculties! what sublime revelations, our complete holiness! what an ocean of bliss, our hearts perfected in the love to God! But the *present* is the time of our spiritual education for heaven, and the great truth God is teaching us--by the deeper knowledge of ourselves, by all our mental infirmities and moral delinquencies, the discipline of trial, temptation, and sorrow--is, "Without Me you can do nothing."

"I was brought low," says David, "and He helped me." See how God teaches us. There is first the soul's *down-casting* before the Lord's *uplifting*. Oh, how low may we be brought! Low in our spiritual life, low in the graces of the Spirit, low in Christian evidences, low in mind, body, and estate; nevertheless, we have experienced the truth of God's Word, "When men are cast down, then you shall say, There is lifting up." O my soul! is the Lord, by His hidden teaching, or by His afflictive dispensations, mowing you down, and bringing you low? It is but bringing you to testify, with the psalmist, "*I was brought low, and HE helped me.*" But look at our Helper!

Our Helper is *DIVINE*. "*HE helped me.*" "The Lord is my helper." The Lord Jesus is all-sufficient as our Helper. "I have laid help," says the Father, speaking of the Son, "upon One that is mighty." The Father required help in the redemption of His chosen Church. He found it in His co-equal and co-eternal Son, in whom met all the divine and human requisites for the salvation of His elect. The help, too, the Father laid upon the Son, was help also for us. Therefore the Lord Jesus is

our Helper--all-powerful, all-loving, all-pitying, yes, all-sufficient for all the needs we bring.

Our help is *OPPORTUNE*. It comes just at the moment we need it, and not a moment sooner. Our down-casting is the time of His uplifting. His help, also, is in *His own time*. The Lord is never *before* His time, and never *after* it, in His gracious interventions in our behalf. Wait, then, His time, O my soul! His time is best. "Blessed are all those who wait for Him."

His help, also, is *EFFECTUAL*. Human help fails to reach our case. The Lord's help is never baffled--it never falls short of our need, urgent, desperate though that need may be. Trust, then, the Lord, O my soul! for "He has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you. So that we may boldly say, *The Lord is my helper; I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*"

But now, as to the nature of the help we need. Each believer walks, for the most part, in his own way, the Lord leading him by a path peculiar to Himself--a path in which he can observe no footprints but Christ's, and indeed a path so narrow as to admit as his companion Christ only. Is your need *temporal*? all the resources of heaven and earth are Christ's, and He who fed five thousand with a few loaves will not leave you, His beloved child, unnoticed and unsupplied. Cry importunately, "*Lord, help me!*" until He helps. Is your need spiritual? 'all fullness' dwells in Jesus. And whether your need be the pardon of sin, or the sense of acceptance in Christ, or grace to conquer some powerful, besetting infirmity, or support and comfort in present sorrow, or guidance in some trying perplexity, or deliverance in behalf of one you love--still cry, "Lord, help me!" and your prayer will not be in vain, so that you may boldly say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT FEAR."

THE LORD MY REFINER

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul"

"He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver."--Mal. 3:3

This is one of the essential appointments of our Lord in His mediatorial mission--the office and work of a **Refiner and Purifier of His Church**. Redemption involved more than deliverance from the guilt and condemnation of sin; it equally secured our emancipation from sin's tyranny and power--our *sanctification* as well as our salvation, a *fitness* for, equally as a *title* to, glory. It was not enough that Christ should purchase the "Field"--the world--for the sake of the "Pearl"--the Church; but having found the precious jewel, it is His purpose to mold it into

a coronet of beauty, wearing it Himself until 'the end comes' when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to His Father, and then shall His redeemed Church be a "crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of our God."

It is a consolatory thought that our refining is in the hands of Jesus--the hands that were pierced for us on the cross. Lord, let me ever fall in Your hands, whether You correct, or rebuke, or slay, and not in the hands of man, for very many and very tender are Your mercies. My soul! your Refiner and Purifier is Jesus. Jesus shapes all your trials; Jesus sends all your afflictions; Jesus mingles all your sorrows; Jesus shapes and balances all the clouds of your pilgrimage; Jesus prepares and heats the furnace that refines you as silver and purifies you as gold. Then, O my soul, tremble not at the knife that wounds you, at the flame that scorches you, at the cloud that shades you, at the billows that surge above you--Jesus is in it all, and you are as *safe* as though you had reached the blissful climate where the vine needs no pruning, and the ore no purifying, where the sky is never darkened, and upon whose golden sands no storms of adversity ever blow or waves of sorrow ever break.

And, O my soul, what deep *need* is there for this refining and purifying of your Lord. What inward corruption, what carnality, what worldliness, what self-seeking, what creature idolatry, what God-dishonoring unbelief, imperatively demand the searching, burning, purifying fires of Christ's furnace! And this is the end of all--to take away your sin, and to make you a partaker of the Divine holiness.

And mark the Refiner's position. "He shall *sit* as a refiner and purifier of silver." It would be fatal to his purpose did the smelter and refiner leave his post while the liquid mass was fusing and seething in the furnace. But there he patiently sits, watching and tempering the flame, and removing the refuse and the dross as it floats upon the surface of the molten ore. So Christ *sits* as a Refiner; and with an eye that never slumbers, and with a patience that never wearies, and with a love that never chills, and with a faithfulness that never falters, watches and controls the process that purifies our hearts, burnishes our graces, sanctifies our nature, and impresses more vividly His own image of loveliness upon our soul. If He places you *in* the fire, He will bring you *through* the fire, "that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." But sweet and soothing is the truth that the believer is not *alone* in the fire. The Refiner is with us as with the three children passing through the burning furnace kindled by the king. The Lord will have us *polished* stones; and as some believers are more rusty and some more alloyed than others, they need a rougher file and a hotter furnace. This may account for the great severity of trial through which some of the Lord's precious jewels are called to pass. Not

less dear to His heart are they for this; it is said God had one Son without *corruption*, but no son without *correction*; for "though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience *by the things which He suffered*." Look up, my soul, your Portion is your Refiner. Be still, humble, submissive. The knife is in a Father's hand, the flame is under a Savior's control.

THE LORD MY HEALER

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul"

*"And He **healed** those who had need of healing."*--Luke 9:11

How mercifully and marvelously is the Lord Jesus suited to the every condition of our sinful, fallen humanity. Take the present illustration. Sin is a deadly wound, a raging malady of the soul. Jesus is revealed as the Great Healer, His blood the sovereign remedy. His own gracious words teach this. *"The whole need not a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."* What joyful news is here! It is as though a royal proclamation had gone forth throughout a plague-smitten city that a sovereign remedy had been discovered and an infallible physician provided, and that whoever were willing to avail themselves of the provision, would be freely and effectually healed.

Such is the royal announcement of the gospel to this sin-stricken world. What joyful tidings, O my soul, are here! Spiritually convinced of the fatal sting of the old serpent the devil; mournfully conscious of the deadly *virus* coursing its way through your whole being, paralyzing every faculty, and tainting every thought, feeling, and action; how welcome the gospel message that there is balm in Gilead and a Physician there, and that Jesus heals all those who have need of healing! All this is the provision of the Father's love. One in nature, the Father and the Son are one in the grand remedy provided for the healing of the soul, so that in bringing my case, desperate though it may be, to Christ, I have the divine warrant for believing that I shall be healed. *"In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might LIVE through Him."*

And what does the Lord heal? The Word of God shall answer. *"He heals ALL our diseases."* Can He heal *bodily* disease? Infallibly, effectually, instantly. When He was here on earth, evil spirits that none could cast out, fled at His word; diseases that none could cure, vanished at His touch. He does so now. His compassion, power, and willingness are the same. Sick and suffering saint! if it is for the glory of God and for your best good, Jesus can rebuke your disease and restore you to health again. But, if it pleases Him to continue your sickness,

suffering, and languor, it is because in His higher prerogative of your spiritual Physician, He would promote thereby the health of your soul. Then, Lord, if this sickness, pain, and weakness are Your means to promote my sanctification and fitness for heaven, my will shall be lost in Your will, and Your will and my will shall be one.

Jesus is the Great Healer of all our *spiritual diseases*. He loves to undertake the care of the sin-sick soul, and never lost one who betook itself to His cross. Come with your spiritual disease, O my soul; it may have baffled every physician and distanced every remedy--Jesus and His Atonement can cure it. "He heals *all* your diseases." He binds up the broken heart, heals our backslidings, restores our wanderings, revives our declensions; and when faith droops through trial, and the spirit faints in adversity, and love chills through temptation, Jesus the Healer comes, and by the fresh application of His blood, and by the renewed communication of His grace, and by the quickening energy of His word, He heals us.

Beware, O my soul, of any healing but Christ's, and of any remedy but His blood. Watch against a false healing of your wound. None but Christ, and nothing short of the blood of Christ. Take your case, as it is, to Him. Go to no minister, to no church, to no rite, to no duty, but go at once to Jesus and His blood, and cry--believingly, importunately cry--"Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed." Oh, what a loving, gentle, skillful healer is Jesus! With not a frown of displeasure, with not a look of coldness, with not a word of upbraiding, will He cure you. He heals sin's worst malady, cures man's incurables, and never loses a patient who seeks His saving touch. "Lord, be merciful unto me--heal my soul, for I have sinned against You."

THE LORD MY DELIVERER

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul."

"Who **delivered** us from so great a death, and does **deliver**: in whom we trust that he will yet **deliver** us." 2 Cor. 1:10

It was a needful and precious petition the Lord Jesus taught His disciples--and which we require daily to offer-- "*DELIVER us from evil.*" We are in constant need of deliverance, exposed, as we are, to continued, varied, and potent evils, visible and invisible, temporal and spiritual, to evade and overcome which we have no native power, and can therefore hope for no self-deliverance.

But who is our true Deliverer? It is He who is our Portion, who taught us thus to pray, and who is Himself our Great Deliverer. Let us take the THREE TENSES employed by the apostle in the words at the head of this meditation, as illustrating the Lord's great deliverance of His people.

And first, there is the Lord's **PAST** deliverance. "*Who **deliverED** us from so great a death.*" Jesus stooped from the throne of Deity to the cross of a condemned felon, to deliver us from 'so great a death,' and from the bitter pains and pangs of the 'second death,' the death that is eternal. A sin-offering for our sins, accursed with our curse, condemned by our condemnation, and dying our death, the precious blood streaming from His torn side and bursting heart made a full atonement for our vast and countless offences, effacing every syllable of the indictment that was against us, and blotting out every stain of sin that was upon us--thus having delivered us from so great a death. My soul! avail yourself of this wondrous deliverance, this perfect redemption, this free pardon; and by the application of the atoning blood to your conscience, walk in the happy enjoyment of all the blessings of a charter of salvation and celestial citizenship which Christ's deliverance makes yours.

Second, there is a **PRESENT** deliverance. "*And He **DOES deliver.***" In addition to the canceling of all past offences, Christ's deliverance involves our *present* emancipation from an unrenewed nature. To pardon our guilt and to leave us the servants of sin and the slaves of Satan would be a species of refined cruelty with which God could never be charged. Our present deliverance, then, is freedom from spiritual death, by which we become living souls, and thus we are now delivered from so great a death, and can join the apostle in "giving thanks unto the Father who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." Yes! Jesus delivers *now*.

Are you in any *present* difficulty or sorrow, need or temptation? Christ can deliver you, and deliver you *now*. Cry mightily to Him. He has power to deliver, fullness to supply, and a loving, sympathizing heart to comfort. Your perplexity cannot baffle His wisdom, your needs cannot exhaust His resources, your sorrow cannot distance His sympathy. He who *has* delivered you out of six troubles will not forsake you in the seventh. O my soul! live upon a *present* Savior, rejoice in a *present* salvation, and do not forget that God in Christ is a very present help in every time of need.

Third, He who *has* delivered, who *does* deliver, will **yet deliver** us in all the **FUTURE** of our history. Faith acquires strength for the *present* by a remembrance of the *past* deliverances of God; and from the experience of the present, it looks forward with confidence to the *future*--"In whom we trust that He will *yet* deliver us." Then, O my soul, be not over-anxious about your future. God is *faithful*, Jesus is *unchangeable*, and all that the Lord your Portion *has*

been He is now, and He *will* be in all future trouble, sickness, and death--an all-sufficient, all-loving, all-faithful deliverer, never leaving nor forsaking you, until He has "delivered you out of the miseries of this sinful world, having your perfect consummation and bliss in body and soul in His eternal and everlasting kingdom." "Call upon Me in the day of trouble--I will DELIVER you, and you shall glorify Me."

THE LORD MY MASTER

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul."

"You call me '**Master**' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am." John 13:13

Emancipated from the slavery of Satan, the believer becomes the servant of Christ, and his highest honor that, henceforth, Christ is his *Master*. What a blissful exchange--the liberty of the child, for the bondage of the slave; the service of holiness, for the wages of unrighteousness; Christ his Master, for Satan his despot; and Canaan, with its vine-clad hills and sunny plains, its flowing rivers and spicy breezes, for the furnaces, the brick kilns, and the darkness of Egypt!

All this **divine grace** accomplishes--for, by the grace of God, we are what we are--and all this is involved in the relation which the Lord our portion sustains to us as our *Master*. It is clear that our Lord did not refuse to acknowledge the relation, but accepted and approved it. Not therefore as an empty title, but as a profoundly significant appellation, He recognized and commended it on the part of His disciples. Equally does it belong to us to claim Him as our Master, and diligently to inquire what are the **privileges, duties, and blessings** flowing to us from this high and sacred relation.

As our Master, we belong to the school of Christ. In other words, we are His disciples or learners. Plato had his school, and Pythagoras his, and proud were the disciples of each to be recognized as claiming either the one or the other as their master. Christ is our Master. He is divine, His school unearthly, His disciples spiritual, His doctrine and His teaching from above. My soul! in this sense--the highest, and holiest, and most solemn--call no man master except Christ.

There are many in this infidel and ritualistic age who set themselves up as heads of 'schools of religious thought' and teachers of theological doctrines, followed by multitudes of unreflecting and deluded admirers, but whose doctrines and

practice, if faithful to Christ, we must ignore and shun as the garment saturated with the plague. Test the spirits by God's revealed word, for many false teachers are gone forth, denying the Lord Jesus, while yet presumptuously assuming the badge of His religion, and falsely wearing the livery of His Church. My soul! sit only at Jesus' feet, and drink of the pure wine of the gospel as it sweetly flows from His grace-anointed lips.

As our Master, we are bound *to obey His commands*. "If you love me, keep my commandments." And truly, Lord, Your commands are not arbitrary and grievous, but Your yoke is easy and Your burden is light; and in wearing the one and in bearing the other there is a present and great reward. "Your ways are ways of pleasantness, and all Your paths are peace."

Sweet and pleasant is His *service*. It blends the lowliest act with the highest honor, the most binding obligation with the most perfect freedom, the severest self-denial with the most exquisite enjoyment, the poorest offering with the richest reward. O my soul, in laboring for Christ you are serving a good, a loving, a faithful Master; and however obscure your sphere and humble your employment, His grace will aid you, His blessing will further you, and He will at the last day publicly and gratefully acknowledge and richly reward the cup of cold water given, and the box of fragrant ointment broken, in His name and for His glory.

As our Master, we His servants are to imitate Him. "The servant is not greater than his lord. If I, your Lord and Master have washed your feet, you ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you." Lord! may I so closely walk with You, so faithfully serve You, and so truly resemble You, that in the servant, the world may trace the image of the Master, whose I am and whom I serve, and glorify Your great and precious Name.

"Lord, if You Your grace impart,
Poor in spirit, meek in heart,
I shall as my Master be,
Rooted in humility."

THE LORD MY SERVANT

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul."

"For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who **serves**." Luke 22:27

It is with the profoundest modesty and humility the pen traces the heading of this meditation! The Lord of life and glory, the Creator of all beings, the Maker of all worlds--our *Servant!* astounding truth! amazing condescension! fathomless grace! But, vast though it be, it is our privilege to receive this truth. Incredible as it may appear, we are bound to believe it, because He has Himself declared it. "*I am among you as he that SERVES.*" Agreeable with this is the teaching of His apostle. "*Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God--but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a SERVANT.*" My soul, you have been contemplating the Lord your portion in the character of a *Master*--now sit at His feet and study Him in the office of a *Servant*. Listen to His language. "For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who **serves**."

In what an impressive light does this office place His *greatness*. It is only the truly *great* who can really *descend*. As the sun appears larger and more resplendent at its setting, so Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, never appeared more like Himself as when He touched at its lowest point the horizon of our humanity; as when He veiled the God in the man, the King in the subject, the Master in the servant, and then stooped to "wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded." O my soul, let this wondrous spectacle heighten your admiration and intensify your love.

It was the Divinity of your Lord which stamped every word He spoke with a meaning so impressive, and which invested every act He performed with a grandeur so sublime. Learn from this that **you are never more truly great as when you are serving Him in His saints**--condescending, in imitation of Him, to men of low estate. No saint of God is too base, no service too lowly, to awaken your love, rouse your sympathy, and engage your service. Think it not above your dignity and position to leave your palatial abode and visit the humble cottage of a poor, aged, suffering saint, and in some humble and loving act become the servant of that 'royal priest,' that 'king's daughter,' that child of God, stricken with suffering, battling with poverty, and, more than all, his soul perhaps conflicting with spiritual doubt, darkness, and temptation. Oh, what a privilege to serve that sick, suffering, sorrowing one whom Jesus loves; and in so doing catch the chimes of His voice as they sweetly fall upon the ear--"Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me."

And still Jesus is serving us. He is among us, and by a thousand kind and condescending acts is ministering to us. He is giving us grace to conquer sin, supplying us with strength to overcome the wicked one, administering comfort in all our sorrows, condescending to our lowly affairs, alleviating our sickness, adjusting our perplexities, mitigating our sufferings, soothing our griefs, and making the hearts of others kind, loving and sympathizing towards us. Oh yes, Jesus makes all our beds in sickness, invisibly and noiselessly moves about our chamber, watches with the most wakeful, tender vigilance around our couch, and in a thousand gentle ways administers to our comfort.

If such the Savior's service for us, what, O my soul, is your service for Him? Are you laying yourself out for Christ, consecrating your substance, talent, influence, time, willingly, unreservedly to the Lord? Then listen to His cheering words--"If any man serves me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be--if any man serves me, him will my Father honor." Then comes the final service of Jesus--"Blessed are those servants whose master finds them watching when He comes. I tell you the truth, He will dress Himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and serve them." Luke 12:37

THE LORD MY TEACHER

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul."

*"You are a **teacher** come from God."*--John 3:2

We cannot dispense with any one mediatorial office of Christ, least of all with His office as a PROPHET, or, TEACHER. He came to make known Salvation. Before He could officiate at His altar as Priest, or sit upon His throne as King, He must *reveal* God's plan of redemption as a *Prophet*.

Look, O my soul, at one or two of the **qualifications** of Jesus as your Teacher. He is a DIVINE Teacher, a "Teacher come from God," to make Him known, to reveal the mind and to unveil the heart of the Father. His own words are, *"All things are delivered unto me of my Father, and no man knows the Son but the Father; neither knows any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will REVEAL Him."* Oh, what a blessed Revealer of God is Jesus! He lifts the veil and shows me the Father as no planet in its glory could, as no mountain in its magnitude could, as no flower in its beauty could--no, not the greatest, most sublime, and loveliest object in nature could. *"He that has seen me, has seen the Father."*

He is also a HUMAN Teacher. We could not learn from angels. Our dulness would weary their patience, our waywardness would exhaust their love, our questions would baffle their knowledge. Our Teacher must be like ourselves, *human*. "And because he is human, he (the Old Testament high priest) is able to deal gently with the people, though they are ignorant and wayward. For he is subject to the same weaknesses they have."

He must be gentle, long-suffering, and infinite in knowledge. Such is Jesus. Oh, with what unfaltering love and unwearied patience--bearing with our dullness, indifference, and ingratitude--does Jesus teach us the precious things of His Word, and the yet more glorious and precious things of Himself. "Lord, I would humbly learn from You, and of You, what You are, and what Your truth is--never, never leaving Your feet."

And **what** does Jesus teach us? He teaches the plague of our own heart, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the hatefulness and nothingness of self, the emptiness of the creature, and the insufficiency of the world. He makes us acquainted with the heart and character of our Father--His thoughts of peace, His purposes of grace, and designs of mercy. He reveals to us His own glory and beauty, fullness and preciousness. In a word, He teaches every spiritual truth and holy lesson essential to the completeness of our education for a heaven of perfect knowledge, purity, and love.

And *how* does Jesus teach us? He teaches by the illumination of the Spirit, by the letter of the Word, by the dispensations of His providence, and by the communications of His grace--yes, by all the events and circumstances, joys and sorrows, lights and shadows of our solemn and chequered life. He is teaching you, O my soul, more of your own nothingness and of His all-sufficiency, by one hallowed sorrow, by one fiery temptation, than, perhaps, you have ever learned in all your previous history--for "who teaches like Him?" Oh, what a *university* in the believer's training for heaven is Jesus' school of affliction! The astronomer only efficiently and practically acquires a knowledge of his sublime science when the sun has set, and the sable robe of night drapes every object in ebony gloom. Thus we, the students of a diviner, sublimer, and holier science--"the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"--become the most spiritual and experimental in our attainments, when the sun of earthly good has set, and the starless night of weeping and of woe shuts every 'creature object' from our view. Blessed Teacher! You have often taught me in the deepest darkness of adversity, more than I ever learned in the brightest sunshine of prosperity!

"O Lord! give Your servant a lowly, meek, and teachable spirit, willing to learn any lesson or truth in any school or way Your infinite wisdom and love may appoint."

"Your way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be!
Lead me by Your own hand,
Choose out the path for me."

THE LORD MY EXAMPLE

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul."

*"I have given you an **example**, that you should do as I have done to you."*--
John 13:15

In contending earnestly for the doctrine of the sacrificial nature of our Lord's atoning death, we may be in great danger of overlooking the fact that **the whole life of Christ is constantly presented to us in the Scriptures as the model by which our own is to be molded.** We needed a personal embodiment of the religion of the gospel--a perfect, peerless *Example*. In One only could we find it, even in Him whose gospel it was, and whose life was a pure and living reflection of the doctrines it taught, the precepts it inculcated, and the spirit it breathed. Let us, then, inquire briefly what are the arts of His holy life in which we may regard Him as imitable, and what the *features* of His character we may presume to transfer with humility and gratitude to ourselves.

We are to follow the example of Christ in His OBEDIENCE. "If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love." Behold the example! As He obeyed His Father with a loving and unreserved obedience, so must His disciples walk in obedience to all *His* commands, ordinances, and precepts, taking up His cross daily and so following Him.

Lord, let there be no reserves in my obedience to You, as there were none in Your obedience to Your Father; but like Your servant Caleb may I follow You *fully*, doing the will of God from the heart.

We must be conformed to the HOLINESS and PURITY of Christ. "As He which has called you is holy, so you be holy in all manner of life." "Every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as He (Christ) is pure." O Lord, I can only be truly happy as I am truly holy; and I can only be truly holy as I am walking even as You walked.

We must be conformed to the HUMILITY and MEEKNESS of Christ. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me--for I am meek and lowly in heart." O Lord, never was there such a model of humility as Yours. Gladly would I transfer this

lovely lineament of Your character and spirit to myself, and in heart and conduct walk humbly with God, and in lowliness and self-abnegation with my fellows.

We are to be conformed to the LOVE of Christ. *"A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you."* Oh, how loving was Jesus! He was all love--nothing but love. He loved God supremely; He loved man self-sacrificingly. Love led Him to obey God, love constrained Him to die for us. Lord, mold me to this lovely example of love--that love to You, and love to the saints, and love to sinners may be the all-commanding, all-constraining principle of my life.

We are to follow the example of Christ's FORGIVENESS of injuries. *"Forgiving one another, if any man has a quarrel against any--even as Christ forgave you, so also do you."* How few there are, even among the followers of Jesus, who present a fair and full reflection of this trait of His character, this prominent fact of His life.

"Lord, let me be found among the few! Give me grace meekly to overlook an injury, silently to suffer a wrong, generously to forgive and forget the unkindness done, the sorrow inflicted, the debt incurred by my fellow-servant, even as You have forgiven and forgotten my transgressions, canceling all my sins and remitting all my debts against You."

Would you resemble Jesus? Then study Him closely, study Him constantly. Study not faint, imperfect copies, but study the Divine-human Original--study Jesus only. The most perfect copy may mislead you, Jesus cannot. Aim to be, not saint-like, but Christ-like; not man-like, but God-like. Less like yourself, more like Jesus. Sir Peter Lely, the great artist, made it a rule never to look at a bad picture, having found by experience that, when ever he did so, his pencil took a hint from it. Lord! prune, chisel, pencil my soul as You will; only make me a *perfect* copy of YOURSELF!

THE LORD MY BURDEN-BEARER

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul."

"Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you."--Psalm 55:22

Wonderful words! Their sense is magical, their sound is music, their very utterance is repose! It is one of those flowers culled from the Lord's garden, pencilled with beauty and laden with perfume, which defies all human art to heighten the loveliness of the one, or to increase the sweetness of the other.

And yet, as most flowers are more fragrant when crushed, and as the grape yields its sweetest juice when pressed, a simple exposition of these precious words, however gentle the pressure, may prove a spiritual fragrance and refreshment to some sin or trial-burdened child of God, whose glance may fall upon these pages.

The FITNESS of Jesus to be the Burden-Bearer of His people surely needs no proof to those who have studied His Word, and are in any measure acquainted with Him. He possesses all the essential qualifications for so demanding an office. What must be the overwhelming weight of all the sins, cares, trials, needs and wants, of His whole Church? What! a mere creature, a finite being, able to stand for one moment beneath the load! Preposterous idea! But our Burden-Bearer is equal in every respect of power, love, and sympathy, to sustain this mighty burden--the burden of God and the burden of the Church. "*I have laid help upon one that is mighty,*" said Jehovah, and that 'help' involved all that the moral government of God demanded, and all that the necessities of the Church required in order to our salvation. Because He was essentially Divine, He was equal to the case. And now, O my soul, what is your burden? Remember the invitation is a *personal* one, and therefore includes every care and need, sin and sorrow, that you have. "Cast *your* burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain *you*."

Is SIN your burden? What a mighty sin-bearer is Jesus. "*Jehovah has laid on Him the iniquities of us all.*" Then, cast this burden on Jesus. Though He bore it all once, He bears it all afresh in every sin we confess at His feet, and in every trace of guilt we bring to the renewed cleansing of His blood. Attempt not to carry your sin a single moment, or a single step--take it at once in penitence and faith to Jesus; confess it unreservedly, and wash afresh in the fountain still open and still accessible to you. "A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet, to be entirely clean."

Is TRIAL your burden, O my soul? Jesus is a '*tried* stone,' and is, therefore, in all respects equal to yours. He has sent, or has permitted, this trial to befall you, that you might learn more of this precious tried stone. The Lord tests the faith of the righteous, that they might test His faithfulness. Test His wisdom to guide, test His strength to sustain, test His love to bring you through this trial, even as gold, to the glory of His great name.

Perhaps your burden is a DIFFICULTY which, like a huge stone, stands in your path, and which no human sagacity or power can remove. "Is anything too hard for me? says the Lord." He can unravel your perplexity, disentangle you from all your difficulties, and roll the stone from your path. Cast *this* burden upon Him. "My eyes are ever toward the Lord; for He shall pluck my feet out of the net."

Is NEED your burden? What need cannot the Lord supply? All the resources of Infinity are at His command. *"The gold and the silver is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills,"* are the words with which He challenges your need, and would suppress your fear. Does He provide for the *fowls* of the air? then do you think that He will starve the *children* of His love?

But *whatever* your burden, cast it in the prayer of faith on the Lord. Peculiar and heavy though it may be, His strength and grace and love will *sustain* you. Encircled by His almighty arm, aided by prayer, upheld by the promises, strengthened by His grace, soothed by His sympathy, and comforted by His Spirit, you shall not sink, for it is written, **"Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you."**

THE LORD MY SHEPHERD

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul."

*"The Lord is **my shepherd**, I shall not be in want."*--Psalm 23:1

The *pastoral* office of Jesus is in beautiful harmony with the existence of His Church under the similitude of a Flock. And there is scarcely any part of His mediatorial work which more essentially involves, or more clearly evidences, the twofold nature of our Lord as this. Fully to discharge the duties of the Shepherd of His Church, He must possess all the perfections of *God*, in equal balance with all the attributes of *man*. He must be *divine* to know, provide for, and keep His flock; He must be *human* to accomplish its salvation, and to sympathize with and aid its trials, infirmities, and temptations. Both these extremes of being--the Infinite and the finite--meet in Jehovah our Shepherd.

Our Lord is a *loving* Shepherd. But oh, what pen can describe the vastness of Christ's love to His sheep--His *one* fold? In proportion to our faith in the love of Christ to us will be the condition of our hearts towards Him. The Lord direct your heart, beloved--perhaps wounded by sin or shaded with sorrow--into the *depths* of this infinite ocean of divine love; that, filling the shallows, and tiding over the unsightly infirmities, failures, and sins of your Christian life, you may walk in its happy, holy influence. Oh, lose not sight of your Shepherd's love!

Christ is an *atoning* Shepherd. This was His own declaration. *"I lay down my life for my sheep."* These words will admit of no rational, intelligent interpretation other than that, having *"loved us, He gave Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice unto God."* And what should be the sanctifying influence of the Atonement of Jesus? Should not His death *for* sin, be our death *to* sin? How

forcibly the apostle puts this truth-- *"Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous for good works."*

Think, O my soul, of the **power** of your Shepherd. When David would prove his ability to confront the vaunting Goliath, he reminded Saul that he had slain both the lion and the bear which had invaded his father's flock. But Christ, our true David, the Lord our Shepherd, has overcome all our enemies--condemning sin, bruising Satan, conquering death and the grave--and has thereby proved His power to slay the lion and the bear of all our spiritual foes, ever prowling, ever watching, ever plotting to worry, wound, and, if possible, to destroy the sheep given to Him by His Father, and purchased with His own atoning and most precious blood. But, *"They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of His hands."*

It is the especial province of the Shepherd to provide suitable and plentiful pasture for the sheep. This He most faithfully does. He provides the green pastures of His Word into which by His Spirit He leads us. Yet more, He has provided for us His flesh to eat and His blood to drink, figuratively, spiritually, believingly. Truly has He prepared a table of the richest and costliest provision in the wilderness, and before our enemies, at which He Himself presides, saying to each welcome guest, "Eat, O friends, drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved."

Sit down, O believer, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Why should you be lean and famished, even though a famine may prevail, when all the promises of God are yours, and all the provision of the gospel is yours, and all the supplies of the covenant are yours, and, above all, all the fullness of Jesus is yours? Among these divine meadows you may roam, feed, and lie down until the Shepherd calls you to richer pastures on high. Until then, keep close to the Shepherd's side-- *'Jesus only'*--and feed with the sheep--the ONE Church of Christ, and do all you can to enlarge the flock and to spread the renown of the Shepherd who ransomed you with His own blood, who sought you in the cloudy and dark day, and, laying you upon His shoulder, bore you gently back to His fold.

THE LORD MY RESTORER

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul."

"He restores my soul."--Psalm 23:3

It is not the least important duty of the Shepherd--under which similitude our meditation yesterday viewed our blessed Lord--to go in quest of the stray ones of the flock. It would be an extraordinary exception indeed, were there none such--no silly lamb, no fickle sheep wandering from the fold. The religious history of the believer is a history of declension and revival, of departure and return, of his backsliding and of the Savior's restoring. The regenerate soul is *bent* upon backsliding from the Lord. The sun does not more naturally decline, nor the planets start off from their center, than does the believing heart wander from God.

"O Lord, how many and hidden are my soul's departures from You, You only know! How often my love chills, my faith droops, my zeal flags, and I grow weary, and am ready to halt in Your service. Mine is a sinful, roving heart, fickle to You as the changing wind; false to my vows as a broken bow. But You, O Lord, are my Shepherd, and You restore my soul; pitying my infirmity, knowing my wanderings, and tracking all my steps, You recover, heal, and pardon Your poor, silly sheep, prone to leave Your wounded, sheltering side in quest of that which can be found in Yourself alone."

He restores us *gently*. When He might justly commission some harsh messenger to awaken us from our reverie, and bring our sin to our remembrance, He sends a gentle Nathan to say to us, "*You are the man*"--some kind and loving messenger, filled with the 'meekness and gentleness of Christ,' to remind us of our backsliding, to deal with our sin, and to win and lead us back to the Savior, towards whom our love had chilled, and from whom our feet had strayed. Recall His own gentle dealing. Behold Him traversing mountain and valley in search of the one sheep that had wandered; nor resting until He had found it--then, laying it upon His shoulder, with soft and gentle step, He bears it back to the fold, amid the welcomings of the flock, the music of its own restored joy and the songs of angels.

The *faithfulness* of Jesus in our restorings is not less conspicuous. Though we prove faithless and unbelieving--and oh, what words can describe our unfaithfulness to Christ!--yet He is faithful and cannot deny Himself. It is a sweet truth, O my soul, which you should never forget, that the love and constancy and promises of Jesus are never negated or affected by your conduct towards Him. When our love to Jesus chills, or our spiritual frames and feelings fluctuate, we are prone to infer a similar change in the Lord; whereas, to awaken us from our drowsiness, to bring us to reflection and prayer, He may suspend the sensible manifestations of His presence and the especial communications of His grace; and, ceasing to stand and knock, may withdraw Himself a while, leaving us to exclaim, "I opened to my beloved, and He had withdrawn Himself." Nevertheless, His loving-kindness He will not take from us, nor allow His faithfulness to fail.

Oh, the love of Jesus in curbing our waywardness, checking our wanderings, arresting, healing, and restoring our souls. Truly He forsakes not His people, though they forsake Him times without number. How can He turn His back upon one bought with His sufferings, groans, and tears? How can He forsake the work of grace wrought in the soul by His Spirit? He may withdraw Himself for a time, gently to awaken us from our slothfulness and slumber, yet He returns again, and our lips gratefully sing, "He *restores* my soul."

And for what intent are all the Lord's loving *corrections* and faithful *rebukes*--His measured, though often painful, and even crushing *afflictions*--but to bring back our wandering hearts to Himself? O blossoming rod, O sweet bitter, O bright cloud, O loving, gentle chastening, that arrests my wanderings, hedges my path so that I cannot find my lovers, and turns my feet back to His ways of pleasantness and to His paths of peace. "He restores my soul, He leads me in the paths of righteousness, for His name's sake."

THE LORD MY LIGHT

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul."

*"The Lord is **my light**."*--Psalm 27:1

Without approaching the Pantheistic idea that all nature is God, the Christian can trace God and Christ in all nature; and affirm that, the religion which glows in the sunbeam, sparkles in the dew drop, breathes from the floweret, is the religion of Christ; because, material though the object be, it yet shows forth the glory of God, images some feature of Christ's person, illustrates some truth of His word, and inculcates some lesson of His gospel. Nature, more true to God than man, ever rises above and beyond itself, elevating the renewed and reflective soul from matter to mind, and from mind to spirit, until, quickened with a life from God, the soul soars to God through Christ, to find its study, happiness, and repose in His infinite fullness as that fullness is embodied and revealed in the person and work of the Lord Jesus.

"Read nature; nature is a friend to truth;
Nature is Christian; preaches to mankind,
And bids dead matter aid us in our creed."-- *Young*

But the natural man is spiritually dark; yes, in the abstract meaning of the term, he is *darkness*. "The way of the wicked is as *darkness*." "The light which is in them is *darkness*." Hence, departing out of this world still in the darkness of an unrenewed state, they go from the inner to the "outer darkness," where there is

weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. My *unconverted* reader, ponder, oh, seriously, prayerfully ponder this dreadful condition and these appalling words! Living in this world without Christ, you live in the darkness of spiritual death; and dying without Christ, you pass to a darkness infinitely and eternally remote from every ray of light and joy--a darkness that is 'OUTER' and 'FOREVER.'

But what is true *conversion*? The words of inspiration shall answer. It is a "*calling out of darkness into God's marvelous light*" (1 Pet. 2:9). Have you so been called--called by the especial and effectual grace of God? Oh, it is of more infinite moment that you should know that you are *converted, born again* of the Spirit, that you have become a "new creature in Christ Jesus," that you are a 'child of the light,' and are safe for eternity, than to possess the diadem of the universe! For, "what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Solemn, urgent question!

But Christ is the *Christian's* Light. The believer is a 'child of the light and of the day,' having passed into God's *marvelous* light. 'Marvelous light' it is! 'Marvelous,' because it is divine, flowing from Him who is Essential Light, the Fountain of all Light. 'Marvelous,' because it is Incarnate Light, dwelling in Christ Jesus, who is our Light. 'Marvelous,' because it is communicated to us by the Holy Spirit, by whom alone the darkness of the soul is dissipated, and Christ, the true light shines. In a word, 'marvelous,' because of the surprising grace, the free and sovereign mercy by which we who were once darkness are now light in the Lord.

Yes, O my soul, Jesus is your light. He is the Light of your salvation, the Light of your comfort, the Light of your path, the Light of your hope of glory. "In Your light we shall see light." Guided by His light you shall walk through dreary nights and cloudy days, through tempestuous seas and stormy winds of adversity, temptation, and sorrow, until He leads you home to "the inheritance of the saints in light," where "the sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end." Isaiah 60:19-20

THE LORD MY KEEPER

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul."

"Those who You gave me I have kept."--John 17:12

And who *could* keep His people but the Lord Himself? All the saints and angels in heaven could not keep a believer from finally falling and forever perishing. Unable to keep themselves, how could they keep another? There is not one rational being in the universe who, left to his own upholding, but would prove his own destroyer--and terrible would his suicide be! The restraining and upholding power of God over His creatures, is marvelous, universal, and incessant. "*Power belongs unto God.*" It reigns in heaven, it rules on earth, it is felt in hell. "*God has spoken once, TWICE have I heard this* (heard it in the solemn tones of its resounding echo), *that POWER belongs unto God.*" "*Kept by the POWER of God.*"

In the intercessory prayer which Jesus, in the exercise of His priestly office on earth, offered--the Royal Prayer, pre-eminently and emphatically the Lord's Prayer, a type of His intercession on our behalf within the veil--His keeping of His people is solemnly affirmed, "Those that You gave me I have kept, and none of them is lost." But you will perhaps reply, "Was not Judas given to Jesus, and was he not lost?" Most assuredly! and the answer to this is, Judas was given to Christ as a disciple, as an apostle, as a minister, but not a saint, nor for the salvation of his soul. And what a dreadful picture, and what a solemn lesson does his history present! We gather from it how far a religious professor, or a Church officer, or a preacher of the gospel distinguished for his gifts and usefulness may go, and yet be utterly destitute of the *converting* grace of God, and dying so, "*go to his own place.*" O Lord, "hold me up, and I shall be safe." "Keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins, and let them not have dominion over me." "Search me, O God, know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way."

But the Lord is our keeper. He is a **Divine** keeper. Deity alone could keep us from falling. The same power that upholds the universe upholds the saints, and no power short of this could uphold them one moment. My soul! the Savior that redeemed you and called you, *keeps* you; and because He is divine, you are *divinely* kept, kept every moment, and kept forever! "Kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation."

But we equally needed a **human** keeper, one in personal union with our nature, acquainted with our weakness, in sympathy with our infirmities, temptations, and sorrows. We have all this in Jesus, the Lord our Keeper. Oh, there is not an angel in heaven who could have compassion upon our infirmities, pity our weaknesses, sympathize with our assaults, bear with our proneness to fall, and restore us when we wander. Jesus can! Jesus does!

Nor does this divine keeping release us from the solemn obligation of personal and incessant prayer and watchfulness. There is a sense--limited indeed--in which the believer is his own keeper. "*Keep yourselves* in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 21). Let us,

then, be in our watchtower whole days and whole nights, watching over our besetting sins, watching against the evil of the world, and watching against the assaults of the Evil One of the world. Oh, you weak and humble saint of God, often fearful lest at last you will fall short of heaven, look up! the Lord that bought you with His blood, called you by His grace, preserves you by His indwelling Spirit, and who prays for you moment by moment that your faith fails not, *keeps* you, and will continue to keep you, until He brings you to glory. "Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever! Amen!"

THE LORD MY CARE-TAKER

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul."

"He cares for you."--1 Pet. 5:7

This may be with you, my soul, a day of anxious care. The sun shines brightly, all nature is clad in beauty, and every object smiles. But with you it is a cloudy and dark day, and your heart is sad--a *care* presses you, anxiety shades you. And now you are casting about if perhaps you may respond to it--yet with much unbelief, despondency, and fear as to the result. But, be still! The Lord, who is your Portion, is enough for each cloudy day, and is enough for this. Come, sit down and meditate a while upon this truth, and see if this pressure may not prove a real uplifting, this anxiety a sweet repose, and this cloud reflect a silver light, by stirring you up to prayer, and leading you to learn more experimentally and blessedly what Jesus is in His all-sufficiency for all our needs. Thus, "Out of the eater will come forth meat, and out of the strong will come forth sweetness."

If the Lord cares for us, then without any figure of speech He is our *Care-taker*. Though all worlds, all beings, all events, all creatures, are hanging upon His arm, and yet we have not a care, infinitesimal though it be as an atom, or light as a cobweb, but the Lord cares for it. Can anything more truly and impressively illustrate the greatness of Jesus than this--that, as great is He, nothing in the history of His saints is too small or trivial for His notice and regard. Alas! we deal too imperfectly with God in the *little* sins and the *trifling* acts of disobedience in the daily duties of life. It is one of the believer's highest attainments in grace to live *to God in small things*. We think, for the most part, that because God is so great, He can bend His infinite mind only to objects and things that are *great*. Whereas, we forget that, He who is so great that the heaven of heavens cannot

contain Him, has condescended to say, "I dwell with him also who is of a contrite and humble spirit."

But He cares for us. My soul, has not Jesus proved it? Did He not care for you when He embarked in the work of your salvation? Did He not care for you when you were dead in trespasses and in sins? And when the Holy Spirit convinced you of sin, and broke your heart, and led you in holy contrition to the cross, did not Jesus manifest His care for you then by raising you up from His feet, enfolding you in His arms, and applying His atoning blood to your conscience, saying to your tempest-tossed spirit, 'Peace, be still,' and there was peace?

The Lord cares for you still. He cares for your needs, for your trials, for your temptations, for your sorrows. Still more, He cares for your holy, happy walk--for the doubts and fears and tremblings which sometimes assail you--for the darkness which often enshrouds you--for the loneliness and solitude of the way by which He is leading you home to Himself. Only cast your care upon Him, whatever it may be, with a child's simple, unquestioning, unhesitating faith, and be anxious only how you may most love, trust, and glorify Him. Make His service your delight, His honor your study, His truth your care, and sweet peace will spring up in your soul, shedding its soothing influence throughout your whole being. "Don't be anxious about anything--but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known unto God. And the peace of God (this is the Christian's true *heart's ease*), which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

But if you go to Him with your care, and return with it still corroding, shading, and crushing you, it is not because the Lord *refuses* to take it upon Himself, but because you refuse to transfer it to Him. You go, and you come away with it still entwined around your heart, and wonder that you find no relief. But, leave with Him your care, be it the care of your soul or the care of the body, hang it upon His arm, lay it upon His heart, and sweet will be the repose your Father in heaven will give. "HE CARES FOR YOU."

THE LORD MY PROVIDER

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul."

"And my God will supply all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." Philip. 4:19

The anxious care of yesterday has expanded into the pressing need of today. The trouble that was near has come, and the need you anticipated is urgent. Be

it so. The life God intends His people should live is not one of sight but of faith, not one for tomorrow but for today. For the most part, He will allow them to have nothing in hand, lest it should mar the simplicity, and so interfere with the operation of their faith. Like the poor widow whose little oil God increased by Elisha, we are often led to exclaim-- "*Your handmaid has nothing in the house but a jar of oil.*" Our dear Lord recognized our *daily* life of faith, by teaching us to offer the daily prayer, "Give us *this day* our *daily* bread."

The apostle wrote these words in grateful acknowledgment of a gift of love he had just received from the Philippian saints. He had ministered to them of his *spiritual things*, and they, in return, ministered unto him of their *temporal things*, "an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to God." And now, as if conscious of his inability to make them any adequate return in kind, he instructs them in a truth, and breathes for them a prayer, most precious--"And my God will supply all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

Let your soul anchor itself on this truth, "God is *my* God," and though the winds may blow, and the billows surge, and the sky darken, you shall not be moved. Needs may be great and urgent, claimants harsh and pressing, resources clean gone, yet, if the believing soul can take hold of God, and claim its interest and proprietorship in Him, none of these things shall move it. And God is your God, O my soul! Your God in an everlasting covenant, your God in Christ Jesus, your God in a thousand troubles past, your God and your Guide even unto death.

God is as pledged as He is able to supply all our *temporal* need. He would have us recognize and deal with Him as the God of *providence* equally as the God of grace. The divine promise is, "Your *bread* and your *water* shall be sure." Has He ever failed you? He may have brought you to an extremity--the barrel of meal and the cruise of oil well-near exhausted--"not anything in the house but a jar of oil"--yet He knows your need, and at the last will appear and supply it. Faith may be sharply tried, but it shall surely triumph in the end. "*Gad, a troop shall overcome him--but he shall overcome at the last.*" There may be a present and a temporary defeat of faith in its battle with trying and afflictive circumstances, but, like the tribe of Gad, it "shall overcome at the last." God shall supply all your temporal needs according to His covenant engagement and inexhaustible resources. Only trust Him.

Above all, is the Lord our *spiritual* Provider. If He provides for the *body*, most assuredly, and yet more richly and amply, will He provide for the *soul*. "There is grain in Egypt." There is the raining manna and the gushing rock in the desert. All the supplies of the covenant of grace, all the fullness that is in Christ Jesus, all the boundless resources of the Triune Jehovah, are for the needs of the believing soul. You need more *faith*--Jesus is its Author, and He will increase it.

You need more *grace*--out of His fullness you may draw 'grace for grace,' or, as it is in the Greek--wave on wave. You need more *love*--feed its waning flame at the altar of His, and while you are musing on His wondrous love, the fire of *yours* shall burn. Thus take all you need to your Heavenly Provider, and He will supply it--not according to your stunted desires, or unbelieving expectations, or personal deserts--but, "according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

"What need shall not our God supply
From His abundant store;
What streams of mercy from on high
An arm almighty pour?"

"From Christ, the ever-living spring,
Those ample blessings flow;
Prepare, my lips, His name to sing
Whose heart has loved you so."

THE LORD MY REST

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul."

"They have forgotten their resting-place."--Jer. 50:6

To the weary, way-worn soul how sweet and expressive the word--*Rest*. The class is a large one. We need not extend our research into the outer world--there, indeed, the circle has no limit. Oh, what a *wearied* humanity is ours! But, restricting our observations to the regenerate Church of God, who of all the saints composing it will not exclaim--"The sweetest chimes that float from the belfry of heaven are those that breathe of *rest* for the weary soul." Sit down a while and listen to the music, and, weary and sad though you are, did ever sweeter strains of melody break on the ear than these words of Jesus, "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, *and I will give you rest*"?

Who can count the myriads now in glory, once toiling through this weary world, footsore and sad, often "ready to halt," on whose ears these words fell "in sweeter strains than angels use," causing them to 'lie down in a quiet resting-place.' But are these words fully and clearly understood by all the Lord's weary ones? If so, why do unrest and roaming exist among them to so painful an extent as it does? Is it not because the following points are not clearly seen and practically recognized?

Do we distinctly see that **a personal Savior** is the true rest of the believing soul? We may rest in the gospel of Christ, in the promises of Christ, in the work of Christ, and yet be far from that *real* rest which brings with it a comfortable assurance of perfect forgiveness and freedom from condemnation which it is our privilege to attain. Until our humble faith apprehends a *Personal Savior*, we have not fully apprehended that for which we are apprehended of Christ Jesus--we have not reached our highest point of rest--rest in Jesus Himself. The saints of God deal too faintly with the *Personalities* of the ever-blessed Trinity. They seem to forget that Three Distinctions in the Godhead are not attributes, or influences, but, Divine and distinct PERSONS. They lose sight of the *Personality* of the Father, and of the *Personality* of the Son, and of the *Personality* of the Spirit; and in so doing they dishonor each distinct Person of the Godhead and rob Him of His distinction and glory. And now we are invited, weary and worn and sad, to a *Personal Savior*, in language it would seem impossible to misinterpret. He does not say, 'Come to my church,' or, 'come to my minister,' or, 'come to my gospel,' or, 'come to my work;' but, in the clearest and most emphatic language--paraphrasing His words--He says, "Come unto ME; pass by every object and being and work, and cast yourself, guilt-laden and ready to perish, in faith upon ME, a living, loving, *personal* Savior, and you shall find the rest for which your weary spirit pants." Thus, O my soul, come! Thus, O Lord, I do come!

And oh, **what a rest** is Jesus! In embracing Him we embrace all rest--the blood that pardons, the righteousness that justifies, the grace that sanctifies, the sympathy that soothes, the power that keeps--is all realized in a personal acceptance of a personal Redeemer. To Him, then, repair, O sin and sorrow-laden one! Rest in the love His heart cherishes, in the blood His heart shed, in the compassion His heart feels, yes, in all that He is--all things are yours, for you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Beware of **forgetting** your Resting-place. It was the sin of the Church of old, "They have forgotten their resting-place." Let memory forget all else--the fondest being, the dearest name, the loveliest object--but in sin's weariness and woe, in affliction's sorrow and suffering, in starless nights and cloudy days, when all other resting-places are broken and destroyed, oh, *do not forget* that your present, your true, and your only resting-place is--JESUS.

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Come unto me and rest--
Lay down, you weary one, lay down
Your head upon My breast.

I came to Jesus as I was--
Weary and worn and sad;

I found in Him a resting-place,
And He has made me glad."

THE LORD MY BISHOP

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul."

"The Bishop of your souls."--1 Pet. 2:25

The Greek word, *episkopos*, rendered *Bishop*, signifies *Overseer*, one who watches over the interests of the Church, superintends its order, and administers its discipline. In this sense it primarily and pre-eminently applies to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Universal Bishop of His one elect Church, and especially as the Bishop, or, Overseer of each individual member of that Church. Now, there is something peculiarly beautiful and assuring in this title of Jesus, as it relates to the spiritual interests of the believer. Observe, Jesus is the Bishop, or, Overseer of the *soul*, as distinct from the providential care He takes of the *body*. "The Bishop of your *souls*." Study your Lord, O believer, as sustaining this high, responsible, and close relation to you, and receive the divine instruction and rich comfort the Holy Spirit intended to convey to you thereby.

As the Bishop of our soul, *He is its author*; thus, He is more than all other bishops could possibly be--He is a *creating* bishop. Thereby Jesus proves His *Divinity*. The Creator must necessarily be before and above the thing created. Now creation is ascribed to Jesus. "*All things were made by Him (Logos, the Word), and without Him was not anything made that was made.*" To what rational conclusion do these words conduct us but the one, that the Bishop of our souls is essentially and absolutely GOD? Oh, blessed, assuring truth! what substance and stability it gives to faith reposing upon the Atonement. The Atonement reposes, in its turn, upon--DEITY.

Jesus is a *life-giving Bishop*. We have more than natural life from Him; we have *spiritual* life. "In Him was life" essential; in Him also was life *Mediatorial*; and this life was in Him for us. "Christ who is our life." Sweet thought! the spiritual life by which we become, in the highest sense, 'living souls,' is in Jesus, and from Jesus our Bishop! In virtue of our union with Him, we become partakers of His life; and this we have, not so much in virtue of our engrafting into Him as His dwelling in us by His Spirit. Thus, each believer has a risen or a living Christ dwelling in His heart through the Spirit by faith. And thus the regenerate soul is safe forever, since, before he can be lost, the personal Savior dwelling in him must perish!

Jesus is also a **soul-redeeming** Bishop. He has done what no other bishop ever has done, or ever could do--*He died for us*. The Church of Christ has had her martyr bishops--such were Latimer and Cranmer--but they only died for the truth, whereas Christ died for His Church. Their blood was witnessing, sealing blood--Jesus' blood was atoning, redeeming blood. How dear, then, to our divine, redeeming Bishop, must be the *souls* for whom His own travailed in the unknown sorrow of the garden, and in the death-agonies of the cross!

Lastly, Jesus is, in the divinest and most blessed sense, the Bishop, or **Overseer**, of our souls. He guards, watches over, keeps, and guides us, moment by moment, with a vigilance, tenderness, and individuality inexpressibly great. *"The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous."* The eye of His providence watches over your body, the eye of His grace watches over your soul. It is the oversight of *love*, eternal love, redeeming, unchanging love! Oh, what a *loving* Bishop is Jesus! Was ever love like His? Was ever such love heard of, thought of, displayed, as the love of Jesus, the Bishop of our souls? My soul, keep near your Bishop's side! No other bishop possesses His authority, can give His Spirit, offer His sacrifice, or communicate His grace. Earthly bishops are but men, men of like passions as ourselves--sinful, fallible, mortal. But Jesus is the Divine human Bishop, at whose feet, O my soul, you sit--to whose authority humbly you submit--in the luster of whose divine mitre you ever rejoice, until He shall exalt you to be a "king and a priest" in the Church above, where at His feet all crowns, and coronets, and mitres shall be devoutly and adoringly laid, and He shall be "LORD OF ALL."

THE LORD MY LEADER

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul."

*"He shall gently **lead** those that are with young."*--Isaiah 40:11

In other words, those who are burdened, and need a skillful, sure, and gentle *Leader*. Such is Jesus, and as such, the Scripture, which cannot be broken, is fulfilled which prophesied concerning Him. "Behold, I have given Him for a LEADER to the people." We need just such a Leader as Christ is. Our journey to heaven is across a waste, howling wilderness, through an enemy's country, all armed and combined to resist, dispute, and oppose our every step. It is a road, also, all untraveled and unknown. Over the entrance of every new path is written-- *"You have not passed this way heretofore."* A new bend in our life transpires, a new path in our pilgrimage is presented, involving new duties and responsibilities, new cares and trials; and like the disciples who, on Mount Tabor,

feared they entered into the cloud, with fear and trembling we gird ourselves for the new, cloud-veiled position which God in His goodness has appointed us.

But why these doubts, these tremblings, these fears? Jesus is our Leader. He knows all the way that we take, has mapped every road, has appointed every path, and leads us through no duty or sorrow or suffering in which He has not gone before us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps. As a Teacher, He leads us into all truth; as a Captain, He leads us from victory to victory; as a Shepherd, He leads us into green pastures; as a Guide, He leads us along our difficult path, skillfully, gently, safely, and so fulfills His precious promise, *"I will instruct you and teach you in the way in which you shall go--I will guide you with my eye."* Oh, what a combination of blessings center in Christ, flowing forth like beams of light from the sun, as streams of water from the fountain, touching at every point, in every place, and at every moment all the circumstances, needs, and trials of His Church.

And HOW does Jesus lead us? He leads us ***graciously***. He leads us in conversion by His Spirit out of ourselves, and out of the broad road of destruction into Christ, the narrow way, but the way everlasting. He leads us along all the stages, and through all the exercises, of our Christian experience, leaving us not when our frames are low, and our evidences are obscured, and our faith is assailed, and darkness, often thick darkness, covers our soul as with a pall. Who could skillfully, patiently, and faithfully lead us along all the mazes, intricacies, and perils of our Christian course safely to glory but Christ our Leader?

He leads us by His ***providence***. "I will guide you with my eye." It has been quaintly but truly remarked, that, "they who watch the Lord's providences will never lack a providence to watch." God's eye, by which He guides His people, is His providence, and it is our wisdom to keep an eye of faith vigilantly, constantly upon His eye of providence, watching every glance, and interpreting every look, as guiding us in the way in which we should go.

Commit yourself, O my soul, confidently to the Lord's leading. The way may appear all wrong to you, but it is the ***right*** way. Mystery may enshroud it, trials may pave it, sorrows may darken it, tears may bedew it, and not an answering look or an echoing voice may relieve or cheer its loneliness, nevertheless He is leading you by the ***right*** way home. "I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them." Isaiah 42:16

"Now, Lord, I take You at Your word, make good this promise. I am a poor, blind child, not knowing my way; and when I do see it, I am often so burdened that I

cannot walk. Take me by the hand, and gently, skillfully lead me until traveling days are over, and I am at home with You forever. You have promised gently to lead the burdened and feeble who cannot travel, still less keep up with the flock. Lord, lead me!"

THE LORD MY FOOD

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul."

"For **my flesh is the true food**, and my blood is the true drink." John 6:55

The believer in Jesus is divinely and richly fed. He lives on more than angels' bread. We know but little what *that* food is, but this we *do* know—

"Never did angels taste above
Redeeming grace and dying love."

This wondrous feast was reserved for man--fallen, sinful man, doomed to die. Draw near in faith, O my soul, and sit down afresh at this heavenly banquet provided for you by electing love and sovereign grace. Listen to the description of the Feast as given by Him who is both its Founder and Substance, "*For my flesh is the true food, and my blood is the true drink. All who eat my flesh and drink my blood remain in me, and I in them.*"

Listen again, and to the same gracious voice inviting you to the meal, "*Eat, O friends, drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved.*" Was there ever such a provider, ever such a provision, ever such guests? Let us consider in a few words the two elements of which this Royal Banquet is composed. The present meditation will include the *first*.

"*For my flesh is the true food.*" The language is obviously figurative, and is to be interpreted as His words on another occasion are, "I am the *door*," and as those employed by the evangelical prophet, "All flesh is *grass*." This, the only rational and correct theological interpretation the words of our Lord will admit, at once explodes the notion of a *corporeal*, or, *real presence* of Christ in the elements of the Lord's Supper--a notion religiously held by the genuine Romanist, and surreptitiously adopted by the semi-Romanist--while yet claiming the profession and dignity of a Christian and a Protestant!

Such is the divine bread, the true nutriment of the renewed soul. The Lord never intended that His people should live on anything below Himself. The life within us is divine, and its nourishment must be divine. It is from heaven, and its nourishment must be heavenly; it is supernatural, and its food must be spiritual.

If we attempt to live upon anything but Christ, we shall soon exclaim with bitterness of soul, "My leanness! my leanness!" As our natural life can only be sustained by food suited to its nature and maturity--milk for babes and strong meat for those who are of full age--so our spiritual life can only be kept healthy and vigorous by living upon food adapted to its requirements--which is Christ the Bread of life--His flesh is the true food. "The one who feeds on me will live because of me."

Such is the daily life of faith we are to live, and living such only, can we grow in grace and in a knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. The fruits of the Spirit within us are kept vigorous, healthful, and abounding by the life, the nourishment they daily derive from Christ. Nothing else is true spiritual food. The word, the ministry, the ordinances are all divinely appointed and exceedingly needful and precious means, but they are not Christ, and only help as they lead us to Christ. Oh, live daily and simply upon Christ, and your soul shall be fat and flourishing. Live upon Him for everything--for the grace that subdues the *power* of sin, and for the blood that cleanses the *guilt* of sin. Live upon Him for the wisdom that counsels, and for the sympathy that supports you. Live upon Him for the evidences of your union with Him, and for the union itself. Look not within for holiness and comfort, but look only to Jesus. Seek not your fruitfulness from yourself, but from Christ. "From me is your fruit found." Your true, your only food is the flesh of Christ, eaten in simple faith--that is, a full, a loving, a gracious, an ever-present Savior, standing at your right hand prepared to respond to your every cry, and to supply your every need, and to soothe your every sorrow.

Again I repeat, attempt to live upon your spiritual exercises, upon your faith, or love, or joy, or peace, or fruitfulness, and your soul will starve; but, live a life of daily, hourly faith on Christ, and your soul shall be "filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God."

THE LORD MY DRINK

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul."

"For my flesh is the true food, and **my blood is the true drink.**" John 6:55

Life is sustained by life. It is God's ordained law in nature, His yet higher law in grace. The believer is the subject of spiritual life, but his life springs from, and is nourished by, life--*the life of Jesus*. His soul lives, but only as it is fed and nourished by the life blood of the Savior. "*The blood is the life.*" "*It is the blood that makes atonement.*" Jesus having given us His flesh to eat, offers yet more.

He presents to us a cup to drink, a wondrous cup, such a cup as angels never tasted; and yet the vilest of earth's fallen race are permitted to drink freely of it, have drank deeply of it, are drinking of it now, and will continue to drink of it until they pass to that bright and holy world where "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more;" but, where they shall eat of the "hidden manna," and drink from the "pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb." And now what are we to understand by our Lord's words-- "*My blood is the true drink.*"

The first thought which they suggest is, ***the believer's experimental acquaintance with Christ.*** To taste or to drink of a thing is to have an *experimental* knowledge of it. There are many religious professors who read of Christ's blood, and hear of Christ's blood, and outwardly commemorate Christ's blood, but who never *spiritually* and *experimentally* drink of Christ's blood. Oh, let us not be mere professing, theoretic Christians; but real, vital, experimental Christians--living *by* Christ, living *on* Christ, and, having Christ in us the hope of glory, looking forward to that blessed hope of being *with* Christ forever.

Another idea is, the ***soul-quickenng, nourishing power*** of Christ's blood. We drink naturally that our life may be strengthened, refreshed. Thus we drink spiritually and by faith of the blood of Christ, that the Divine life within us may be invigorated, revived. "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you." Oh, there is nothing which so truly and so effectually moistens and nourishes our Christian graces as the blood of Jesus. As there is *life* in the blood, so the blood constantly flowing around our living, believing, loving hearts, nourishes the roots of our grace, and causes faith and love, peace and joy, patience and hope, to bloom and blossom, and bring forth fruit in our souls.

Our Lord also signified by the expression the ***continuous application*** to the sin-healing, guilt-cleansing efficacy of His blood. As our natural *thirst* needs incessant supplies, not less intense and imperious is the thirst of the spiritual healthy soul for the constant application of the blood that cleanses from all sin. Our spiritual travel through a sin-polluted and sin-polluting world, involving constant contamination and taint, demands our frequent washing in atoning blood. "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean." O my soul! keep the roots of your profession well moistened with Christ's blood. Keep your heart constantly sprinkled with Christ's blood. See that all your religious doings and duties are cleansed in Christ's blood. Live near the Fountain, live, yes, *in* the Fountain.

"So shall your walk be close with God,
Calm and serene your frame;

So purer light shall mark the road
That leads you to the Lamb."

Constrained by love, and in the exercise of faith, approach, O my soul, the Table of the Lord, and eat of His flesh and drink of His blood in obedient, grateful remembrance of Him who gave His life a ransom for you, and who said, *"Do this in remembrance of me."* *"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."* Let no sense of unworthiness, weakness of faith, or coldness of love keep you back; since you come, not to remember yourself, but your Lord--not to commemorate your love to Him, but His great, His dying love to you.

THE LORD MY SAVIOR

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul."

*"You shall call His name Jesus--for He shall **save** His people from their sins."*--
Matt. 1:21

It is from this alabaster box of precious ointment that the sweetest, holiest odor breathes on the Church, and throughout the world, wherever and by whomever the name of Jesus, which is as ointment poured forth, is proclaimed. But, wherein lies the great charm, power and sweetness of this One Name? It is in the fact that He--SAVES. "His name shall be called Jesus, for He shall **save**." Of all the points of light in which the Lord our Portion is seen, there is not one equal to this--the Incarnate God--my SAVIOR. All other glorious and precious views are swallowed up in this.

If Jesus were not a *Savior*, He would be nothing to us. But if we can spell His name JESUS, though it may be with faith's most stammering tongue and faltering accents, we may put in a personal and confident claim to all that Jesus is, and to all that He has done. There are many from whose lips this precious name frequently and musically breathes, but who, while they bend the knee to it, are still the servants of sin and the slaves of Satan--having never experienced in their souls the saving power which this name contains, or the emancipation it was designed to confer. They know the name of Jesus historically, intellectually, theoretically; but nothing of it personally, spiritually, savingly. What multitudes saw Him, heard Him, conversed with Him, followed Him, and shouted their "hosannahs" when He was upon earth, who, nevertheless, slighting and rejecting Him, died a Christless, graceless, hopeless death, with no other prospect than that of the impious Balaam, "I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but not near."

But, O my soul, what a debtor are you to divine, free, and discriminating grace; for to you the name of Jesus is life, joy, peace, and hope yes, it is "every precious name in one," the dearest, sweetest name in earth or in heaven. You have not simply heard of Him with the hearing of the ear, but you have been drawn to Him by cords of love, or impelled by an overwhelming sense of your lost condition as a poor sinner, finding salvation in no other name but His. But, whether drawn or driven, Jesus is precious to you, the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely One; yes, He is to your faith, hope, and love "all, and in all;" your Alpha and Omega, your first, and last, your resounding, never-ending jubilee. But what does our precious Jesus actually do for us?

He saves us from the **guilt** of sin. This He accomplishes by His precious blood-shedding. "Such were some of you, but you are *washed*." "He that is *washed*." "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." Walk, O my soul, in the constant realization of this, by a daily application of the blood to the conscience. Keep not the guilt of sin for one hour--but the moment its taint distresses, and the cloud shades, and the wound inflames, go *at once* to the Fountain opened, wash, and be clean.

Jesus saves us, too, from the **power** of sin. "He shall *subdue* their iniquities." This is what the truly saved soul pants for--deliverance from the *tyranny* of sin. We cannot be happy--blessed be God--while *one* sin remains unsubdued, while *one* corruption has the ascendancy. But, by His conquering grace Jesus saves us from the dominion of sin, breaking its neck, subduing its principle, weakening its power, enabling us to shout, "Thanks be unto God, who always causes us to triumph in Christ Jesus."

Jesus saves us also from the **condemnation** of sin. Condemned Himself as our Surety for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that, "there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." Oh, what a finished, accepted, glorious salvation is ours! But not only are we saved from the condemnation of sin, but we are saved *unto eternal life*. Jesus will not leave the work He has undertaken incomplete, nor be satisfied until He has safely brought all His blood-bought, blood-washed, blood-saved people home to glory.

THE LORD OUR PEACE

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul."

"*He is our peace.*"--Eph. 2:14

There is a beautiful gradation in the development of the graces of the Spirit in the believing soul--first *peace*, then *joy*. This is a merciful and gracious provision of our God. There are, alas! but few *rejoicing* Christians; and yet, in the absence of *joy*—(the subject of our next meditation,) what a comfort that we may arrive at a state of *peace*, this being a fruit of the Spirit growing lower down on the tree, 'bearing all manner of fruit,' and therefore more accessible than the higher grace of *joy*, a fruit found on loftier boughs, and growing in a sunnier region. "The kingdom of God is *righteousness*, and *peace*, and *joy* in the Holy Spirit."

Thus we often hear in the dying experience of God's saints the expression--"I am not joyful, but I am *peaceful*. I have no great ecstasy or transport of feeling, but my soul believingly, sweetly rests on Jesus, and I am kept in perfect *peace*." Well, this is no small Christian attainment and divine blessing; and if our peace is a genuine fruit of the Spirit, springing from simple faith in Jesus, the effect of His peace-speaking blood upon the conscience, it is worth countless worlds, and "passes all understanding." A few reflections may aid us in the fuller realization of this blessed state.

In the first place, we must keep the great essential truth ever in view that, not only can Christ make peace, give us peace, and bequeath His peace as a precious legacy, but, ***Jesus himself is our peace***. "Christ is our peace." This thought raises us above a mere dogma, to a *Person*--above the *truth* of Christ, to *Christ himself*. God says of the sinner at variance with Him--"Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me" (Isa. 27:5). Now "Christ is the Power of God," or, the Strength of God, taking hold of whom in faith we are at "peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Thus the expression so general, "he made his peace with God," as applied to many who pass out of this world into eternity without any scriptural evidence of *conversion*, involves a fearful delusion and a fatal error. The sinner cannot of himself make his peace with God. Christ has already made peace, or rather, Christ is Himself our peace; and until we believe in Christ, and have received Christ, our boasted peace is false--it is the peace, not of life, but of *death*--the peace of Satan, easily understood; not the "peace of God, which passes all understanding."

Yes, Jesus is our Peace. He stood in the breach, bore the sin, endured the curse, and suffered the condemnation. Upon Him fell the stroke that bowed His holy soul in sorrow to the earth, and so secured our reconciliation with God. "There is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus," even Jesus, "the Prince of Peace."

And now the *atoning work* of Jesus in its two distinct branches--the *blood* that pardons, and the *righteousness* that justifies--is the channel through which peace flows into our soul. The one is termed, "peace-speaking blood," the other

is represented as placing us in a state of free and full justification, and so bringing us into the experience of peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Behold, then, O my soul, the channel through which your true peace flows--the blood of Christ applied to the conscience, and the righteousness of Christ put upon you by the Spirit.

The Lord can give you peace in trouble. When the tempest rages and the waters are dark and billowy, beneath the surface your peace from God, through Christ, may flow like a river. You are firmly anchored in faith on God. "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You." Guard against that which would compromise your peace, O my soul. Toy not with temptation, trifle not with conscience, walk not at a distance from Jesus. Wash daily in the Fountain, and your peace shall be as an ever-springing well. "When He gives quietness, who then can make trouble?" "Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always, by all means."

THE LORD MY JOY

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul."

"Yet I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation."
Habakkuk 3:18

The lowly *bud* of *peace* has now blown into the fragrant *flower* of *joy*--a higher grace and a more advanced stage in the happy life of the believer. That this is an attainment in the divine life to which, alas! but few Christians arrive, has already been intimated. And yet it is a kindred grace of the Spirit, growing upon the same 'tree of life,' though, as we have remarked, found upon its higher and more sunlit boughs. The apostolic precept, "*Rejoice* in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice," is as personally and as solemnly enjoined as any holy precept of God's Word. It may aid you, O my soul, in attaining in some measure to this high, holy state, if you will consider some of the reasons why the child of God should be a *joyful* Christian, yes, always rejoicing!

In the first place, we ought to rejoice that ***God is our God in an everlasting covenant.*** Can the wing of faith soar higher? Is there beyond this another, a loftier, or a richer spring of happiness? Surely not! To be enabled to say, in the exercise of humble, filial faith, "God is my God, my Father, my Portion, my All," is to pluck the richest, sweetest fruit that grows upon the tree of life. Oh, rise to this, my soul! Uplift your too drooping pinion and soar! Listen to the words of God Himself respecting the remnant, or third part left in Jerusalem, and whom He will bring through the fire, and refine them as silver is refined, and try them

as gold is tried--"I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, *The Lord is my God*" (Zech. 13:9). Oh, what a joy to lay faith's hand upon Jehovah and exclaim, "This God is *my* God! all His perfections smile upon me, all His attributes encircle me, all His resources are at my command; He is my God forever and ever, and will be my guide even unto death."

What a rich, fathomless fountain of joy is **Jesus**, O my soul. All the offices He fills, all the relations He sustains, all the supplies He possesses, belong to you. His thoughts entwine you, His heart beats for you, His eye is over you, His hand guides and keeps you moment by moment. Who ought not to be joyful who can say, "Christ is my Brother, my *Goel*, (next of kin,) Christ is my Friend, loving me at all times; Christ is my Redeemer, ransoming me from condemnation; Christ is my High Priest, making constant and successful intercession for me within the veil. Oh, realize what a portion, what a treasure, what a very present help, what an almighty, sympathizing, full Savior Jesus is, and the water of your sorrow shall be turned into the wine of your joy.

And what a joy should it be that you have *a throne of grace* at all times to repair to. He who knows from personal and sweet experience the privilege and power of *prayer*, must be a *joyful* Christian. Is there a higher, holier, sweeter privilege this side of glory? Dark though the cloud is, crushing the burden, bitter the sorrow and pressing the want, the moment the believer arises and *gives himself to prayer*, the cloud dissolves, the burden falls, the sorrow is soothed, and the need is met and more than supplied. "They looked unto Him, and were lightened." Oh, what joy is this--access by the blood of Jesus within the holiest, lost in the effulgent glory that encircles the throne of a Father's love!

And what a joy **to know that we are saved!** Realizing this fact, it would be no exaggeration of our joy were we to proclaim from the house top--"I am saved! I am saved! for ever saved!" Think what *hell* is! think what *heaven* is! and then to know, to be *quite sure*, that we are snatched from the one and shall soon arrive at the other. Oh, *this* is "joy unspeakable and full of glory." The thought of being in heaven--forever with the Lord--no more sin, no more suffering, no more tears, no more death, no more separation--oh, it were enough to lift us superior to present tribulation, and to make the desert across which we journey resound with our songs of joy, until we rise to sing forever the new song before the throne of God and the Lamb.

THE LORD MY SONG

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul."

*"The Lord is **my song**."*--Psalm 118:14

A *joyful* spirit is a *praiseful* spirit; and He around whom our loftiest, sweetest praises gather, has, for the encouragement of this holy exercise said, *"Whoever offers praise glorifies me."* That there are, as we have remarked, so few *joyful* believers, will account for there being so few *praiseful* believers in the Church of God. Praise is one of the holiest graces, as it is one of the sweetest employments, of the believing soul. As far as the enjoyments of the glorified saints are revealed--and the door of heaven is only open ajar, in order that *sight* might not in any degree impair the simplicity of *faith*--we learn that, **praise is the chief employment and recreation of the saints in glory.** Read attentively the unveilings of heaven, dim though they are, in the Apocalypse, and this fact will come home to you with great power--that, the 'golden harps,' and the 'new songs,' and the loud 'hallelujahs' of heaven, all indicate that music, or praise, is the grand recreation of the glorified saints who stand upon Mount Zion, and upon the sea of glass, having the harps of God; their high, transporting anthem--the "Song of Moses, the servant of God, and the Song of the Lamb!"

My soul, pluck your harp from the willow, where too long it has hung in silence, and, waking its lower notes, praise your God for *providential* mercies--for the blessings of this life--food and clothing, home and friends, His daily care and thought of you.

Praise Him for *sovereign, calling, converting grace*. Oh, did we but fully realize what conversion is, and were more clearly assured that we were truly converted, would not the very thought kindle our soul with the deepest thanksgiving, and wake our harps to the loudest praise?

Praise Him for *preserving grace*. We need the same divine power that called us by grace, to keep us from falling from the *profession* of grace. From the *possession* of grace, the true believer can never fall. *"The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that has clean hands shall grow stronger and stronger."* *"They shall never perish."* But the history of God's Church proves that **no power can keep the best of saints from falling into the worst of sins, but the power of God.** Have you been thus kept, O my soul, in many temptations, dangers, and stumblings? Then wake your harp to the high praise of Christ's power, faithfulness, and love. *"Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."*

The Lord, too, is our song in view of the consolations and comforts of His grace. You have been brought through many deep sorrows, have traveled many dark stages, and cloudy days of your earthly pilgrimage; but your consolations have been neither few nor small. The God of all comfort has never deserted you, "the Consolation of Israel" has never failed you, and the Divine Paraclete, the Holy

Spirit, the Comforter, has ever stood by to soothe, soften, and heal your wounds with the wine and the oil of divine grace and human sympathy--both flowing from the heart of Jesus.

Then, uplift your praises with every morning's light and evening's shadow. Praise Him with a new song for every new blessing. Praise Him for *everything*; for the cloud that shades, for the beam that brightens, for the mercies given, for the mercies withheld; for all He removes, for all He bestows. Praise Him for every affliction He sends, for every cross He appoints, for every sorrow He mingles, for every temptation He permits. Praise Him for present sickness and suffering, bereavement and loss; for a blessing is in it all, and all demands our grateful praise. Oh, cultivate a thankful, praiseful spirit. It will cheer many a lonely path; sweeten many a bitter trial; lighten many a burden borne along life's weary, dusty road, home to God. Soon the praises of earth will be exchanged for the higher, holier, and more lasting praises of heaven. And then will come the "new song" of glory, honor, and thanksgiving unto Him who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever.

THE LORD MY CREDITOR

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul."

"How much do you owe my master?" Luke 16:5

There is not a greater *debtor* in the universe than the believer in Jesus. The natural man owes God much--ten thousand talents--but the *renewed* man owes God ten thousand times more--a debt of love, gratitude, and service such as the highest number cannot compute, or the longest eternity pay. It is very salutary to keep constantly in mind our *indebtedness* to Christ. We are prone to forget it. We are tempted at times to imagine that, some little service of love, or act of obedience, or season of suffering, has cancelled, in some degree, the immense obligation we are under to God; no, more, we are even tempted to cherish the delusion that, by this very sacrifice on our part of self-denying service and endurance of suffering, we have actually made the Lord Himself our debtor! But this will not always be the reflection of a truly spiritual mind and Christ-loving heart; of one who, in view of what Jesus has done for him--the hell from whence he is ransomed, and the heaven to which he is raised, exclaims--

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

We owe Jesus supreme, obedient, and self-denying love. Oh, if there is a being in the universe whom it were no exaggeration of affection to love with every throb of our hearts, it is JESUS. This supreme concentration of love on one object implies no rupture of tie, or lessening of affection towards others. There is a *self-love*, natural and proper; there is *conjugal* love, holy and deep; there is *parental* love, tender and enduring; and there is *filial* love, God-commanded and God-honored--all these bonds of affection may exist in harmony with a *supreme love to Jesus*, which, while it recognizes and hallows them, towers above, transcends, and out-shines them as the sun the inferior planets which revolve around it, their center.

We owe Jesus unwearied service. True religion is *practical*. The grace of God in the heart is *diffusive*. Divine love in the soul is *constraining*. The service of Christ, to which our grateful love binds us, is perfect freedom and a supreme delight. Are you, my soul, devoting yourself to the service of your Lord, who consecrated His whole life, yes, Himself for you? Are you lending a loving, sympathizing, helping hand to His *ministers*--vindicating, encouraging, aiding them? Are you seeking the conversion of souls, and thus aiding to increase His kingdom? What are you doing for Jesus?

We owe Jesus our talents, time, and substance. If we recognize the fact that we are not our own proprietors, then it follows that there was nothing exaggerated in the entire devotion of the early Christians, of whom it is recorded, "No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own." Yes! we are not our own, but Christ's; and if we withhold from Him our one talent, burying it in the earth; our time, frittering it away in the mere baubles and trifles of life; our property, lavishing it in self-indulgence, we are robbing Christ of what by right of creation, redemption, and vow of consecration belongs to Him, proving ourselves to be unfaithful stewards. Can we ever do or suffer too much for Him who paid all our great debt of obedience, and suffering, and death both to law and justice, that we might go free? Oh no! My soul! how "much owe you unto my Lord?" Lord! I owe You my talents, my rank, my wealth, my time, my all!--body, soul, and spirit, through time and through eternity.

"When this passing world is done,
When has sunk yon glowing sun,
When we stand with Christ above,
Looking o'er life's tale of love;
Then, Lord, shall I fully know--
Not until then--how much I owe.

"When I stand before the throne,
Dressed in beauty not my own;
When I see You as You art,

Serve You with unsinning heart;
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—
Not until then--how much I owe."

THE LORD MY EXPECTATION

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul."

"My soul, wait only upon God; for my expectation is from Him."--Psalm 62:5

It is the sin, as it is the mortification, of the believer, to *expect* too much from the creature, and too little from the Lord. In the one case disappointment, often painful and humiliating, is the inevitable result; in the other, a precious fulfillment of the divine and gracious promise, *"Those who wait for Me shall not be ashamed."* How elevated and hallowed the experience of David, as embodied in the portion which suggests our present meditation, *"My soul, wait only upon God; for my expectation is from Him."*

Look, first, at the OBJECT of the believing soul's expectation--*it is **God***.

Faith, hope, and love could not stretch their pinions higher. And yet, divine as is this Object of expectation, high and lofty as is His place of abode, holy and bright as is His nature, the lowliest soul, uplifting its longing, believing, expecting gaze, may reach Him, and realize its highest, fullest expectation! Oh, how faintly we deal with the all-sufficiency of our God!--how we limit the Holy One of Israel!--how we confine and distrust Jesus! My soul! has God in Christ ever failed, ever disappointed you? Has there ever been--can there ever be--any confounding of His wisdom, any baffling of His power, any lessening of His resources, any exhaustion of His goodness, faithfulness, and love? Never! Then, O my soul, cease from man, cease to make flesh your arm, abandon your expectation of help, of supply, of sympathy from the *creature*, and *wait only upon God*.

And study, my soul, the POSTURE--*waiting*. It is the posture of faith, the attitude of love, the expression of patience and hope. We are often too impatient of the Lord's *delays* in our behalf. We may indeed pray, "make no tarrying;" and yet the vision may tarry its appointed time, but, though it tarry, it will surely come. The Lord may keep you long waiting at the throne, to test your sincerity, and try your faith, and prove your love, but, in the end, He will appear--your prayer is heard, and shall be answered.

And look at the EXCLUSIVENESS of this expectation. *"My soul, wait **only** upon God"*--*only* upon Him. Ah! how hard the lesson! How tenaciously and idolatrously

we cling to the creature! With the creature in one hand, and with the Creator in the other, we think to carve our way through all oppositions, difficulties, and needs. But, no! this must not be. The Lord will have our simple, honest, and exclusive trust. He will not allow us to expect from man what only can be found in Himself. He is a jealous God, and will have our honest, undivided hearts. Are you seeking salvation? Let go of all expectation of finding pardon, and peace, and hope in anything of your own doing; and simply and only take hold in faith of Jesus, and your expectation of being saved--saved without a work of your own--saved from the power, guilt, and condemnation of sin--saved now, saved at once, and saved forever--shall never be ashamed.

And what, O my soul! might you expect? Everything! There is no limitation. God's promise is, *"Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it."* Could language be more simple and explicit, or promise more full and precious? Expect, O my soul, great things from God. Expect large supplies of grace from Jesus. Let your expectation be high as His being, wide as His resources, vast as His love. Expect His answer to your prayer; expect the fulfillment of His word; expect His providential supplies of your need; expect sympathy and soothing in your grief; expect deliverance in the mount of danger; expect, at the last distressing moment, strength, support, and deliverance; grace to help you in every time of need. And when heart and flesh fail, and you pass down the shaded valley, solitary and alone, expect that Jesus will be with you there; and your expectation shall not be disappointed, nor your hope be made ashamed. **"My soul, wait only upon God; for my expectation is from him."**

CHRIST IS ALL, AND IN ALL

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul."

"Christ is all, and in all."--Col. 3:11

We close these devout meditations with a magnificent Doxology--*Christ all, and Christ in all!* It is an epitome, the substance, the consummation and crown of the whole. Each theme has been a wider opening of the Divine jewel box, presenting another and a closer glimpse of the precious, priceless gem it contained. We now uplift and remove the lid, and, lo! it stands before us in all its grandeur, luster, and completeness--CHRIST, ALL AND IN ALL. Language is exhausted, imagery supplies its last symbol, imagination drops her wing, for inspiration can bear it no *higher--Christ is all, and in all!*

"Blessed Jesus! You are all in all, in creation and redemption, in pardon, grace, and glory. You are all in all in Your Church, and in the hearts of Your people--in

all their joys, all their happiness, all their exercises, all their privileges. You are all in all in Your word, ordinances, means of grace, the sum and substance of the whole Bible. Do we speak of promises? You are the first promise in the sacred word, and the whole of every promise that follows; for all in You are 'Yes and Amen'. Do we speak of the law? You are the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes. Do we speak of sacrifices? By Your one sacrifice You have for ever perfected those who are sanctified. Do we speak of the prophecies? To You give all the prophets witness, that whoever believes in You shall receive the remission of sins. Yes! blessed, blessed Jesus, You are all in all. May You be to me, Lord, the all in all I need in time, and then, surely, You will be my all in all to all eternity!"

My soul! *all that Jesus has is yours!* Every perfection of His nature, every throb of His heart, every thought of His mind, every drop of His blood, every shred of His righteousness, every atom of His merit, is *yours!* How rich and vast the inventory! How precious and boundless the wealth! Draw largely upon His opulence--He will honor every draft--sink deeply into His fullness--He will supply every need--"for all is yours."

But, my soul, Jesus is not only *all* to you, but ***He is in all that concerns you.*** He is in every event of your history, and He is in every circumstance of your life. He is in every affliction--sanctifying it; He is in every sorrow--sweetening it; He is in every cloud, brightening it--He is in every burden--sustaining it; He rides upon every storm and walks upon every billow, saying to the winds and the waves, "Peace! be still." Oh, never meet an event or a circumstance in your daily life, be it sad or joyous, but let your faith exclaim, "Jesus is in *this!* He sent it, He comes with it, He will control it, and I shall prove the all-sufficiency of *His* grace, and He shall have every ascription of my praise!" And if the Lord has seen fit to remove from you the one you loved--the blessing you prized--the supplies you needed--the prop upon which you leaned, it is only that He *Himself* should be your *all in all*. Jesus can fill every blank, replace every loss, and be infinitely more to you than the fondest and most essential treasures He ever gave or took away!

Christ will be all in all when eternity is nearing, and the eye is closing, and the heart is chilling, and the pulse is sinking, and the countenance is changing, and earth is disappearing, and heaven is opening, and friends are weeping--oh then, *then*, JESUS will be ALL AND IN ALL! Down the shaded valley--across the swelling flood--up the celestial hills--onward to the throne high and lifted up--glory bathing it, saints and angels circling it, anthems floating around it--Jesus will then appear as never before--THE ALL AND THE IN ALL of His Church.

"My flesh and my heart fails; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever."

